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20. NESTING BEHAVIOUR AND UNUSUAL FEEDING PATTERN IN COMMON WOODSHRIKE (*TEPHRODORNIS PONDICERIANUS*)

On April 9, 2002 as part of a project 'Conservation of Rare and Endangered Biodiversity of Gujarat (CREB)', we were surveying forest area near Kojachora village (69° 27' N; 23° 15' E), Mandvi taluka, Kachchh, Gujarat. Around 1110 hrs, one of us (JP) spotted a nest of a Common Woodshrike (*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*) on *Acacia senegal*, about 3 m above the ground. The whole patch of forest was dominated by *A. senegal,* interspersed with *Euphorbia caducifolia.* The terrain was undulating and the ground was sparsely covered with grasses like *Aristida adscensionis* and *Dactyloctenium sindicum.* The average tree height was 3.5 m, shrub height 2.5 m and shrub cover was about 40 to 50 % with *Premna resinosa* and *Grewia tenax.*

The nest was constructed in the fork of a leafless secondary branch. It was a cup-like nest, built of soft bark and threads, braced with cobwebs, which also helped to camouflage it. However, it was not protected from the scorching heat. As we approached the nest to check for the presence of chicks, we heard sharp alarm calls from a single individual. From its swift rush towards the nest, we presumed it was a female. After a few minutes, we heard *chip-chip* calls from the nest and saw three small chicks, which were continuously being visited by the mother bird. They were blind, small and naked, demanding food with open mouths. We noticed that within 4-15 m area, the adult bird was fetching deep reddish-brown flowers of *E. caducifolia* and feeding it to the hatchlings. It also brought greenish-white and creamy white fruits of *Salvadora oleoides* and *Acacia senegal*, respectively. In selecting the food for the hatchlings, the adult bird showed maximum preference for *E. caducifolia*, followed by *A. senegal* and *S. oleoides*. Feeding visits slowed down with the increase in atmospheric temperature, which seems crucial in reducing the frequency of this activity.

According to Ali (1945, 1996) and Sunderaraman (1989), Common Woodshrike usually feeds on insects and spiders, but in this case it fed on flowers and fruits as an optional food. This shows that during scarcity of food, the insectivorous Common Woodshrike might depend on flowers or fruits for sustenance, an additional survival strategy to thrive in an arid environment.

We also observed that although both the individuals shared duties for building the nest, incubation of eggs and care of young ones (Ali 1945, 1996); feeding the chicks was exclusively done by a single bird, probably the female.

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21. ALBINO BULBUL AT KEIBUL LAMJAO NATIONAL PARK, MANIPUR, INDIA

Loktak Lake (24° 30' N and 93° 48' E) in the Moirang district, Manipur, in north-eastern India is the major water body in the central part of this State. The lake, along with the surrounding areas, islands and hills, constitutes the Keibul Lamjao National Park, the only natural habitat of the Manipur Brow-antlered Deer *Cervus eldi.* We surveyed most of the

hills adjoining Loktak Lake during November 2000 as part of the Manipur Bush Quail Survey, conducted by the World Pheasant Association, South Asia Office, on behalf of the Indian Bird Conservation Network, Bombay Natural History Society. Though our target species was the Manipur Bush Quail *Perdicula manipurensis*, we also noted other birds found in the survey area, as primary information on birds from these areas are scarce.

While watching birds, a shiny white bird among the foliage caught our attention. On a closer look, we identified it as an albino Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*. It was moving along with a mixed-species feeding group comprised of Red-vented Bulbuls, Yellow-breasted Greenfinches and Spotted-winged Grosbeaks. The albino bulbul had white plumage, even the flight feathers were glistening white. This we noticed when the bird flew from one branch to another. The bird's head was somewhat pale brownish and it had a scarlet-red vent that was quite conspicuous against its white plumage.

The bird apparently was less agile, while the other members of the mixed species flock were moving restlessly from one branch to another, feeding on insects from within the flowers and *Pinus* cones. It kept to a single cone for the greater part of an hour as we watched and photographed its each move. While the other birds fed on the insects from eight different trees, the albino bulbul restricted itself to a single tree. It also turned out to be somewhat shy. Despite our presence the other birds, even other conspecific individuals, fed on nearby trees, but the albino never came close. It confined itself in thick foliage. This might be attributed to an adaptive behaviour of keeping itself less conspicuous among the dense foliage, probably giving itself a better chance of escaping from predators. The white colouration would otherwise get noticed quite easily in the open.

Albino Red-vented Bulbuls have been reported twice (Baker 1915; Joshua 1996) from the Indian subcontinent. Joshua (1996) reported the same plumage pattern for the albino Red-vented Bulbul, a pale brown head and red vent.

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22. USE OF LICHENS IN BIRD NEST CONSTRUCTION: OBSERVATIONS FROM BOLAMPATTI RANGE, TAMIL NADU, WESTERN GHATS

Introduction

Birds use lichens for nest building (Ali 1996), camouflage and feeding on small lichenophagous invertebrates which are present below the lichens (Richardson and Young 1977). Though extensive reports on the preferences of birds towards specific lichen species were available from Australia, Europe and North America (Richardson and Young 1977; Tibell and Gibson 1986), such detailed accounts were not available from India. Ali (1996) reported the use of lichens in nest building by several bird species such as flycatchers (*Muscicapa latirostris*, *M. ruficauda, Culicicapa ceylonensis* and *Hypothymis azurea*); sunbirds, babblers, minivets (*Pericrocotus flammeus*, *P. ethologus*, *P. roseus* and *P. cinnamomeus*), and to a lesser extent Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes madagascariensis*). Considering the intricate relationships between lichens and other organisms, it is felt that the knowledge on use of lichen species by other organisms in India is still superficial and meagre (Krishnamurthy *et al.* 1993; Krishnamurthy *et al.* 1999). This paper enumerates the lichen species observed on a bird's nest.

During our survey in the Bolampatti II range of forests, Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu (11° 2"-10° 54" N, 76° 33"-76° 46" E; Altitude 450-1,500 m), within the Nilgiri Biosphere